

To celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week, a UN Resolution for February 1-7, the MultiFaith Council of NW Ohio held their Annual MultiFaith Council of NW Ohio Clergy / Faith Leader Breakfast on February 7, 2019. There were ten diverse faith traditions represented, and at least 10 Christian denominations. Many of the leaders signed a statement regarding racism and bullying in our community.

The over 60 faith leaders met at Collingwood Presbyterian Church for breakfast, a presentation of the work of the MultiFaith Council and Greater Toledo Compassionate Community, and discussion of how faith communities might address three local critical issues. The following is a compilation of the table discussion notes.

1. Racism and bullying in General Motors plant in Toledo, Ohio

- Challenge core racism ingrained in society. Be courageous to call out racism. Counter the message in schools 'not to tattle', but call out bullying
- Work with children; extremes vs. center
- Through workshops and lectures to make people aware of bullying and create avenues to report incidents and find ways to remedy it.
- Utilize Dialog to Change to learn one's own racist bias
- Racism is a matter of both personal responsibility and changing unjust systems
- Poverty is the root
- Faith response (immediate & many) on social Media
- Organized listening – e. g., Urgent Solidarity Response Team – to create listening outposts and opportunities – and responding
- Worship services of solidarity (as in post Squirrel Hill)
- Need ongoing, deeper PROACTIVE work, presence, growing collaboration, unity, peace, understanding
- Be prepared for REACTIVE response
- Talking to friends gets us nowhere. Talking with our enemies is essential. Identify persons, groups whose stance/thoughts differ / are in conflict with MultiFaith. How do we (do we need to) reach out to , develop communications with strong & strident evangelical roles? How do we develop constructive relationships? Identify and build strategic relationships.
- Use the arts as a conversation starter – I Dream, PARADE, West Side story, Black Artists exhibitions at TMA, Libraries, Religious Houses, Multi-cultural concert, food and sports
- Talk with our own congregational and bio families.

2. TARTA's elimination of Sunday / holiday service; Ability Center Challenge: "What would it take for the Toledo area to be named the most disability-friendly community in the United States?"

- Colette Cordova from the Area Office on Aging shared community task force seeking funding match for Federal dollars – needed \$192,000
- Community Activist for Transportation trying to get TARTA issue on the ballot
- Lucas County Task Force also looking into issue
- Faith Leaders could host educational forums and foster communication among people
- Ballot issue to change from property tax to sales tax to include the whole county. Sylvania Township which decides whether it goes on ballot by three commissioners, two of whom voted against and all three votes would be needed to allow citizens to decide by ballot. Pressure these commissioners.
- Collaborations of bus riders and with Chamber of Commerce
- Racism and classism are part of the issue
- Transportation is a human rights and moral issue

- The policies being made to keep people from work, leisure, and church [no Sunday services]
- Transportation is critical to attract people into the community
- Affects roads – the sales tax would address roads and infrastructure, too. Pot holes anyone?
- Demand 1. A regional transit system, 2. Cross transit bus lines – smaller bus lines, 3. restore Sunday services
- Gas tax that could be applied to public transportation
- Unhappy about routes that take an unreasonable amount of time
- Disability needs
- Coordinate a share a ride program – but not always possible for those with disabilities who need special equipment. Also establish warming centers for under housed
- Work with Daniel Hunt at TARTA for rides support
- All three issues tied together. Go from Property tax to Sales tax

3. Save-A-Lot Closing - Inner-city Food deserts.

- Limits access for persons in the inner city
- This issue is also impacted by transportation challenges
- Could Senior Centers provide transportation to grocery store
- Can we organize an initiative to identify who needs rides and how we can provide it
- Can ProMedica, or Mercy Health be advocates
- Can Boys and Girls Club be utilized to gather information
- Students who need community service hours to gather information
- Get City Council involved – urge City council to make inner city grocery stores a priority
- Can faith communities vote with their dollars – shop at Save-a-Lot and Aldi's
- Why are the stores closing – profit or red-lining?
- Faith communities join and support stores – collaborate with Mercy Health and ProMedica. Ebeid Market is expensive
- University food packages
- Establish more co-ops
- Establish "Know Your Neighbor" programs
- Create and support Community gardens, Toledo GROWs
- Coordinate and train UT students to get involved in meeting community needs